

# Introduction to WIC



**This module requires use of the computer.**



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# Instructions

**This module requires use of the computer.**

See the New Employee Training Process materials for detailed instructions, including how to log onto KWIC Online Training.

The information in one module section usually builds on that in previous sections. Therefore it is important that you start at the beginning of each module and work through it from beginning to end. It is also important to complete the modules in the order listed on the WIC Training Module Completion Sheet.

Words that are printed in the KWIC policy module glossaries are printed in bold italics the first time they appear in the text.

The Progress Checks and Skill Builders are meant to be learning tools. To challenge yourself, try to complete each one without referring back to the text. Feel free to look back in the training module pages if you need to refresh your memory.

Be sure to ask your Local Agency (LA) WIC Coordinator or supervisor if you don't understand the policies and procedures presented in the modules, or what is meant in the Progress Checks and Skill Builders. After completing the module, your WIC Coordinator or supervisor will review your progress and document your completion of the module. If additional review is needed, your supervisor will follow up until you both are confident of your progress.

# What is WIC?

## Objectives

Upon completion of this section, the employee will be able to:

1. Specify the three major types of benefits provided by the WIC Program.
2. Identify several health-related advantages associated with participation in the WIC Program

## Glossary

***Postpartum women*** - Women who have recently delivered an infant.

***Pregnancy outcomes*** - Results of a pregnancy and birth that indicate the health of the infant (e.g., low birth weight, prematurity, death) and mother (e.g., anemia).

## Introduction

The mission of the WIC Program is to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care. The WIC Program is also designed to improve ***pregnancy outcomes*** in pregnant women so infants are born healthy. The program's official name is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. It is easy to see why the program is simply referred to as "WIC".

## History

WIC was experimentally established by federal law in 1972. Because of positive results, WIC became a full-fledged program by 1974. It was created due to growing evidence that women who had inadequate diets during pregnancy had a higher risk of health problems, including miscarriages. Infants whose mothers had poor diets during pregnancy also were more likely to have problems such as lower birth weights, stunted growth, and smaller head circumferences. These problems are indicators for possible health risks in the future. The food package was designed to target certain nutrients that

are particularly important during pregnancy and early life. Studies also showed that these particular nutrients were often lacking in low-income Americans.

The WIC Program was first offered in Kansas in 1974. Currently WIC services are available to residents statewide.

## Who Can Participate?

Participation in WIC is limited to pregnant women, **postpartum women** (breastfeeding up to one year postpartum and nonbreastfeeding up to six months postpartum), infants, and children up to the age of five. To be eligible for the Kansas WIC Program, an applicant must live in Kansas, meet income guidelines, and be at nutritional risk. *(For more information, see the modules on Certification Policies and Nutrition Risk Factors.)*

## What Does WIC Provide?

WIC provides many benefits which can affect the health of participants. These services fall into three main categories.

**Nutrition education.** "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime." WIC demonstrates this proverb.

WIC participants are offered at least two nutrition education contacts during each six-month certification period. The first contact occurs at the certification visit and usually is one-on-one counseling. During the next six months, participants are offered a second contact targeted toward their specific needs. Depending on the situation, the second contact may be a group class or individual session. Breastfeeding promotion and support are major components of WIC nutrition education efforts. *(For more information, see the modules on Nutrition Education and Promoting Breastfeeding.)*

**Referrals to health care and other appropriate services.** The WIC Program is a magnet that draws many pregnant women and their families into the public health care system. WIC participants are referred to health services, either at the agency where WIC is located or to other providers in the community. Many WIC agencies make related services such as immunizations, family planning, and Kan-Be-Healthy screens available at the same time as the WIC appointment. Referrals to other programs such as Food Stamps and Head Start are also part of WIC duties. *(For more information, see the module on Referral, Coordination, and Outreach.)*

**Supplemental foods.** WIC foods are selected because they are good sources of important nutrients which have been found to be generally lacking in the diets of

the WIC population. WIC foods include milk, cheese, eggs, cereal, juice, beans, peanut butter, infant formula, and infant cereal. The WIC food package is intended to supplement foods already being eaten by the participant. The WIC foods are not meant to meet all dietary needs for the participant nor to provide extra food for other family members. *(For more information, see the module on Food Packages.)*

## Is WIC Effective?

The advantages of WIC participation have been studied extensively. As summarized by Henchy and Parker (1993), participation in WIC:

- Decreases the incidence of iron deficiency anemia in children.
- Improves the diets of children.
- Improves the growth of at-risk children.
- Increases the use of early prenatal and well-child health care services, including immunizations.
- Enhances young children's performance on measures of cognitive functioning.
- Improves dietary intake of pregnant and postpartum women and improves weight gain in pregnant women.
- Reduces late fetal death and infant mortality.
- Reduces low birth weight rates and increases the duration of pregnancy.

Another major accomplishment of WIC is that it saves money by preventing later costs. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) compared Medicaid costs of North Carolina WIC participants with Medicaid costs of similar women who did not participate in WIC. USDA reported that for every dollar spent on pregnant women in WIC, the associated savings in Medicaid costs for both mothers and newborns ranged from \$1.92 to \$4.21 during the first 60 days after birth (Devaney, Bilheimer, & Schore, 1990). A subsequent study was conducted to update these findings. After adjustments, researchers estimated that at least one dollar was saved in Medicaid newborn costs for every dollar spent for prenatal WIC services. (Buescher & Horton, 2000.)

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) reviewed numerous studies and estimated that prenatal WIC benefits reduced the rate of low birth weight births by 25% and very low birth weight by 44%. This reduction yields savings to both government and private insurance, savings in special education costs, and savings for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments for disabled children (General Accounting Office, 1992). The GAO estimated that during the first year after birth, the federal government, state and local governments, and other payers (such as hospitals, insurance companies, and private

payers) could save \$2.89 for every federal dollar spent on prenatal WIC. When measured over 18 years, the value increased to \$3.50 for each federal dollar spent.

Brown, Watkins, and Hiatt (1996), compared birth outcomes of women enrolled in WIC with women not in WIC and confirmed benefits to WIC participation. In particular, women enrolled in WIC were less likely to deliver a low-birthweight infant. Other researchers examined the relationship between WIC enrollment by pregnant women and delivery of small-for-gestational-age (SGA) infants. Full-term infants born to women enrolled in WIC were significantly heavier compared to full-term infants born to non-participating women. Enrolling earlier in pregnancy was associated with greater protection from SGA delivery. (Ahluwalia, I., Hogan, V., Grummer-Strawn, L., Colville, W., & Peterson, A., 1998)

## Progress Check #1

For Questions 1 - 3, mark the statements T for True or F for False. Refer to Appendix A to check your answers.

1. \_\_\_\_ WIC was established in the 1930's as a result of the Great Depression.
2. \_\_\_\_ Numerous scientific studies have demonstrated advantages of participation in the WIC Program.
3. \_\_\_\_ A Government Accounting Office study estimated that \$3.50 was saved during the first year after birth for every \$1.00 of federal money spent on prenatal WIC services.
4. The three main categories of WIC benefits are:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, and  
\_\_\_\_\_.
5. Optional. Ask your supervisor to give you materials your LA uses for outreach and to educate new participants about the program. Are the services provided by WIC clearly explained? Do the materials stress the reasons a person would benefit by being a WIC participant?

## More About WIC

### Objectives

Upon completion of this activity, the employee will be able to:

1. Briefly describe the food delivery system used by the Kansas WIC Program.
2. Explain the advantage of implementing an infant formula rebate.
3. Identify several ways WIC differs from other food assistance programs.

### Glossary

***Authorized Kansas WIC vendor*** - A store, usually a grocery store, where WIC participants may use their WIC checks to purchase foods.

***Entitlement program*** - A federal program that provides funding to serve **all** eligible applicants.

***Check*** - The food instrument provided to a WIC participant that specifies the kinds and amounts of foods the WIC participant may purchase at the store.

***WIC Approved Food List (WAFL)*** - List of foods that may be purchased using WIC checks.

### Organization and Funding

At the federal level, WIC is administered by the Food and Nutrition Service of the USDA. Several regional offices provide technical assistance to the state agencies. Kansas belongs to the Mountain Plains region, headquartered in Denver.

The USDA provides the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) with funds to operate WIC. KDHE in turn makes funds available to qualified LA, which operate the program in their communities using guidelines from the Kansas WIC Policy and Procedure Manual (PPM). *See KWIC Reports-Clinic Directory Report-Abbreviated for a list of Kansas WIC clinics.*

*Later in training you will be instructed to read policies in the PPM. It can be found online at [http://www.kdheks.gov/nws-wic/PPM Table of Contents.htm](http://www.kdheks.gov/nws-wic/PPM_Table_of_Contents.htm)*



WIC is not an ***entitlement program***. Federal funds are not automatically available to serve all who are eligible. Federal funding for the program is determined annually by Congress and may increase or decrease from year to year. The WIC Program has a priority system to determine who is to be served first when funds are limited.

## **WIC Food Delivery System**

The program participant visits a WIC Clinic (after certification) and receives a specific number of WIC ***checks***, based on the individual's prescribed food package. The checks specify the types and quantities of food which may be purchased. To save federal dollars and help teach good shopping habits, WIC participants are required to purchase the least expensive brand of many foods, as specified on the ***WIC Approved Food List (WAFL)***. Foods on the WAFL must meet federal and state policy for the different food categories. The WAFL is updated every two years.

The participant uses the checks to purchase the prescribed foods from any ***authorized Kansas WIC vendor***. Authorized vendors can be identified by the WIC vendor window decal. A WIC vendor is authorized through an application and contract process. Although most vendors are grocery stores, a limited number of pharmacies are authorized to provide only special formulas. No other food items may be purchased at a pharmacy. *For more information, see the module on Food Instruments and the Vendor Procedures Manual in the on-line PPM.*

[http://www.kdheks.gov/nws-wic/PPM\\_Table\\_of\\_Contents.htm](http://www.kdheks.gov/nws-wic/PPM_Table_of_Contents.htm)

## **Infant Formula Rebate**

Mothers participating in WIC are encouraged to breastfeed, but State WIC agencies still provide iron-fortified formula for mothers who choose to use it. WIC State Agencies (SA) are required by law to have competitively-bid infant formula contracts with infant formula manufacturers to help reduce food costs. This means the SA agrees to provide one brand of milk and soy based formula to its participants and in return receives money back, called a rebate, for each can of the formula purchased by WIC participants. This way, WIC pays the lowest possible price for infant formula. The rebated formulas vary among states.

As of October 1, 2007, the Kansas rebated formulas are Similac Advance w/ Iron, Isomil Advance, Similac Sensitive and Similac Sensitive RS. Certain other formulas may be provided through WIC as prescribed by a physician for participants with certain medical conditions. The infant formula rebate program provides extra food dollars allowing WIC to serve more eligible participants.

## Summary – How Does WIC Differ from Other Programs?

- WIC is for pregnant, delivered, or breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five.
- WIC eligibility is determined by nutritional risk in addition to residency and income requirements.
- Only designated nutritious foods may be purchased using WIC checks.
- WIC food packages are designed to meet particular nutritional needs of the participant.
- Nutrition education and referrals are an integral component of the WIC Program.
- Only vendors having a WIC Vendor Participation Contract can accept Kansas WIC checks.

WIC helps clients to break the cycle of poor nutrition that can lead to poor growth and development, decreased learning skills, and fewer opportunities to get ahead. By receiving WIC benefits, clients improve their diets and their health. They also learn cost-effective ways to select and prepare nutritious foods. The healthful eating patterns encouraged by WIC will continue to provide positive health benefits to themselves and their families long after they leave the WIC program.

## Progress Check #2

For Question 1, mark the statement T for True or F for False. Refer to Appendix A to check your answers.

1. The WIC food delivery system in Kansas refers to a series of warehouses which ship specific WIC foods to LA for distribution.
2. Liz Jones, a new mother who is applying for WIC, can't understand why she can't get any type of formula for her baby. How can you briefly explain the advantage to Kansas WIC participants of having standard formulas?
3. List at least three ways the WIC Program differs from other food assistance programs such as Food Stamps, food banks, etc. Circle the differences that you believe to be more important. Briefly discuss your opinions with your supervisor.

## Roles of the WIC Staff

WIC Staff at local agencies perform various duties. The WIC staff work together as a team. Each person has a different job but works together for the same goal – improving the health of WIC clients.

- Without the person who answers the phone or screens applications, the applicant may never become a client.
- Without the person who performs nutrition counseling, the client may not have information to make correct choices to improve his or her health.
- Without the person who prepares checks, the client won't have necessary foods for dietary changes.
- Without the person who prepares the program budget there would be no WIC staff and, therefore, no clients served.

When one staff person is missing, the team is hindered in its work and finds it more difficult to provide services the clients need and deserve.

*You are an important member of the WIC Team.  
Thank you for deciding to work with us!*

## WIC Roles in Kansas

WIC uses the term “Competent Professional Authority” (CPA) to describe the staff members who are required by federal regulation to provide certain levels of services related to certification, nutrition education, risk assessment, and food package selection. A CPA is defined in Kansas as a licensed physician, licensed dietitian, registered nurse, or registered physician's assistant. Non-CPA personnel shall not complete portions of the above services that are beyond what is allowed by federal regulation.

The term “Competent Professional Authority” is written into federal regulations. Of course non-CPA staff members are professional and are a vital part of the WIC team.

The Kansas Policy and Procedure Manual is on the Kansas WIC Program website, [http://www.kdheks.gov/nws-wic/PPM\\_Table\\_of\\_Contents.htm](http://www.kdheks.gov/nws-wic/PPM_Table_of_Contents.htm) Got to policy ADM 10.01.00 General Staff Responsibilities – CPA and Non-CPA. This policy shows the six levels of staff responsibility with descriptions. Not all clinics have staff within each level. For instance some clinics may not have Breastfeeding Peer Counselors. Other clinics may not have staff limited to Receptionist roles, but the Clerks perform all the

Receptionist tasks. Your job title might not match a WIC role. For instance, your actual job title might be “Office Manager” or “Health Assistant”.

Additionally, State WIC Office asks that the clinic designate one or more individuals to fulfill the following roles.

- WIC Coordinator
- Breastfeeding Coordinator
- Nutrition Services Coordinator
- Civil Rights Coordinator
- Local Agency Vendor Contact

Refer to the on-line PPM policy *ADM 10.00.00 Job Responsibilities-Overview* to see more about this policy. You can also see details about duties of the WIC Coordinator, Breastfeeding Coordinator in the subsequent policies. If you will become the Breastfeeding Coordinator, Local Agency Vendor Contact, etc., you should read the pertinent policy. Otherwise, it is optional to read them at this time.

### Progress Check #3

1. Use the policy *ADM 10.01.00 General Staff Responsibilities – CPA and Non-CPA*. Identify where you fit into the WIC team at your clinic.
2. Talk to your supervisor about:
  - a. Roles of other WIC staff in your clinic.
  - b. Whether or not you will be taking on any duties such as Breastfeeding Coordinator, Local Vendor Contact, etc.

### KWIC Security Clearance Levels

You just read about WIC staff roles in Kansas. We also have a **different** list called “KWIC Security Levels”. KWIC is a computer software program that automates almost all WIC functions short of weighing a baby. Client records are maintained in the system with the exception of a few forms.

Your role in the WIC clinic determines which windows you have access to in the KWIC System – your KWIC security clearance level. The following descriptions are not meant to be a complete list of duties, but are to provide enough information to know what tasks fall under different security levels.

**Receptionist:** Receptionist security clearance allows the person access to enough windows in KWIC to be able to enter applicants into the system, make/reschedule appointments, answer questions from a client about the date and time of his or her next appointment, and read/write notes. This clearance also allows the person to record vendor complaints in KWIC and generate reports. A person with Receptionist security clearance **cannot** issue WIC checks to clients or complete any portion of the certification appointment.

**Clerk:** Clerk security clearance allows the person to do all the things a Receptionist can do, plus complete certain portions of the WIC certification appointments such as determining income, documenting proofs, providing referrals and recording measurements. This clearance also allows the person to perform all needed functions to print WIC checks, transfer clients in and out of the clinic, terminate clients, send No-Show letters, print reports, and manage nutrition education classes.

**RN:** RN security clearance allows the person to do all the things a Clerk can do, plus complete additional portions of the certification appointments that assign nutrition risk and provide nutrition education. This clearance also allows the person to complete midcertification appointments for infants and low risk secondary nutrition education contacts for clients.

**RD:** RD security clearance allows the person to do all the RN can do, plus document High Risk secondary nutrition education contacts.

**KWIC Administrator:** KWIC Administrator security clearance allows the person to do many things related to WIC clinic staffing and setting up the calendar. This clearance also allows the person to enter specific local preferences to dropdown lists of referrals, handouts, etc; enter survey questions and answers; and print reports. A person with only KWIC Administrator clearance **cannot** perform most functions that deal with direct WIC services. A person who needs to perform these administrative functions and provide direct clinic services will need both KWIC Administrator clearance and whichever of the other clearances is appropriate.

**Clinics should have two people with KWIC Administrator clearance so there is less likelihood that the KWIC Administrator is absent when a change is required.** The KWIC Administrator does not have to be the WIC Coordinator, but usually one of the people with KWIC Administrator clearance is the WIC Coordinator.

**Local Agency Vendor Manager:** Local Agency Vendor Manager security clearance allows the person access to the Local Vendor Management application in KWIC to perform needed tasks related to managing WIC approved vendors. A person with **only** Local Agency Vendor Manager clearance **cannot** access Client Services. A person who needs to perform vendor functions and provide WIC client services will need whichever of the other clearances is appropriate. A WIC Coordinator may choose to have more than

one person complete the module and get clearance, not just the person with the official title of LA Vendor Manager.

**Breastfeeding Peer Counselor:** Breastfeeding Peer Counselor security access allows the person access to all the parts of KWIC that a Receptionist can use. A person with Breastfeeding Peer Counselor security clearance **cannot** issue WIC checks to clients or complete any portion of the certification appointment.

You can read more about KWIC security in ADM 07.02.01 KWIC User

[http://www.kdheks.gov/nws-wic/Administration/ADM\\_07\\_02\\_01\\_KWIC\\_User\\_Security.pdf](http://www.kdheks.gov/nws-wic/Administration/ADM_07_02_01_KWIC_User_Security.pdf)

The State Agency is responsible for handling KWIC security levels. Requests to add or delete security should come from the WIC Coordinator. The following e-mail address has been established to handle security requests: [wicstaffchange@kdhe.state.ks.us](mailto:wicstaffchange@kdhe.state.ks.us) . Contacts may also be made by telephone. Contact the SA as soon as possible when there is a change so that access can be quickly added or removed as needed.

## **Progress Check #4**

For what KWIC security level/s are you training? You should know this from your supervisor. It is also printed at the top of the Completion Sheet that your supervisor is maintaining for you as you go through the training modules.

## Bibliography

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## Appendix A – Answers for Progress Checks

### Progress Check #1

1. False WIC was officially established in 1974.
2. True
3. False A Government Accounting Office study estimated that \$2.89 was saved during the first year after birth for every \$1.00 of federal money spent on prenatal WIC services. When measured over 18 years, the value increased to \$3.50 for each federal dollar.
4. The three main categories of WIC benefits are:
  - **nutrition education (includes breastfeeding promotion/support),**
  - **referrals to health care and other appropriate services, and**
  - **supplemental foods.**

### Progress Check #2

1. False The WIC food delivery system in Kansas refers to the system in which LA provide participants with checks. The checks show specific foods and quantities that may be purchased at retail grocery stores which are authorized as WIC vendors in Kansas.
2. A suggested response is:                      There is very little difference among different brands of standard milk based (or soy based) formulas. For each can of rebated formula purchased by a WIC participant, the Kansas WIC Program receives a rebate from the company. This provides extra money to enroll many more women, babies, and children in WIC than we could using just the money from the government. The formula differs from state to state.

**Note:** Any request for a different formula based on medical reasons must be assessed by a WIC health professional (a CPA).



3. Your list should have points similar to the following list.

- WIC is a program for pregnant, delivered, or breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five.
- WIC eligibility is determined by nutritional risk in addition to residency and income requirements.
- Only designated nutritious foods may be purchased using WIC checks.
- WIC food packages are designed to meet particular nutritional needs of the participant.
- Nutrition education and referrals are an integral component of the WIC Program.
- Only vendors having a WIC Vendor Participation Contract can accept Kansas WIC checks.

How did your opinion of the more important differences compare to your supervisor's opinion?

### **Progress Check #3**

It depends on your situation.

### **Progress Check #4**

It depends on your situation.